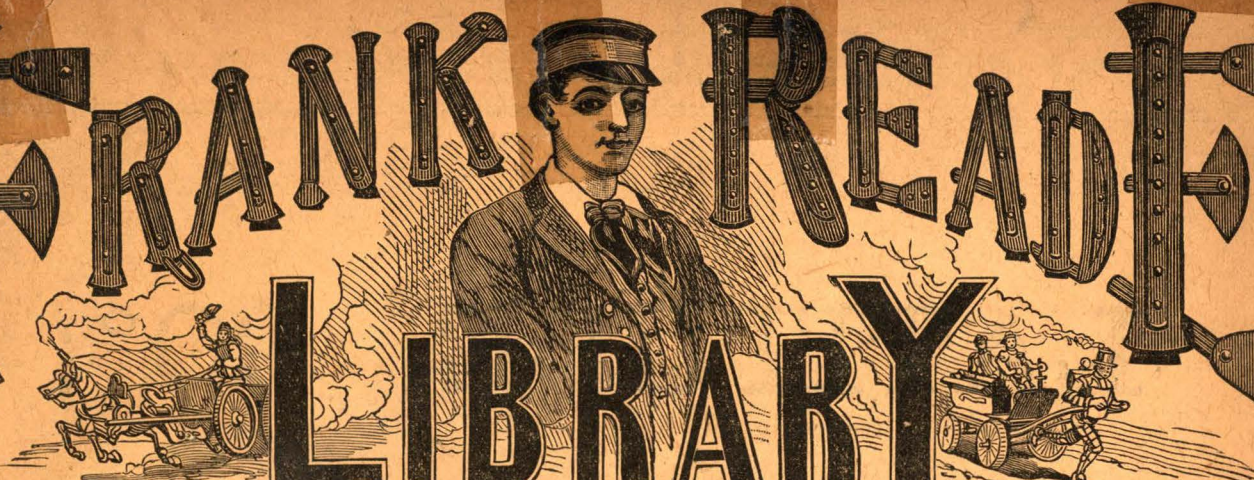


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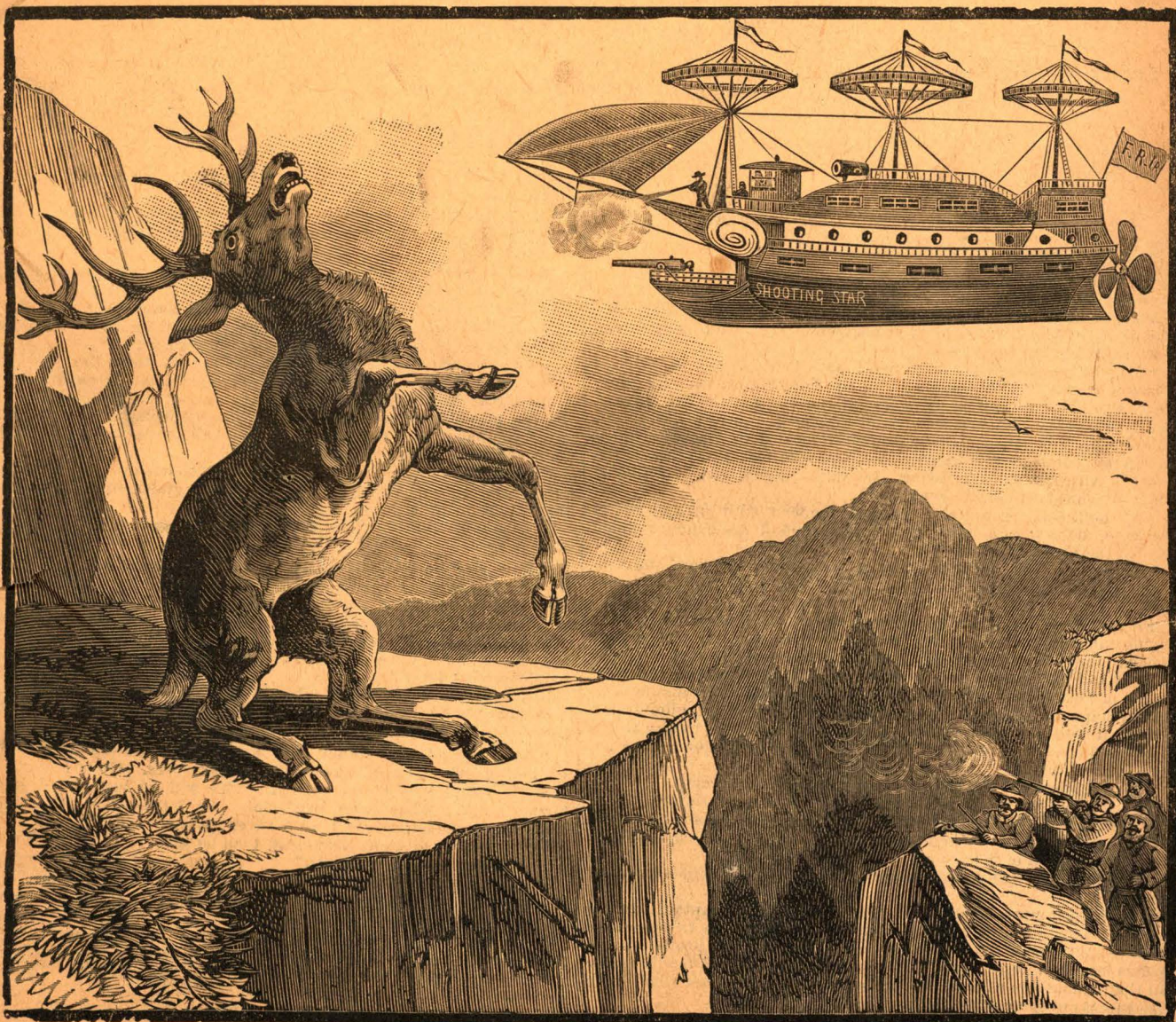
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## LATITUDE 90°; or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Most Wonderful Mid-Air Flight.

By "NONAME."



Barney flung his rifle to his shoulder. He drew quick aim at the elk and fired. The elk fell across the ledge dead on the instant. But this fact was not what caused the three voyagers a mighty start.



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# LATITUDE 90°;

OR,

## Frank Reade, Jr.'s Most Wonderful Mid-Air Flight.

### A STRANGE AND THRILLING NARRATIVE.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Six Sunken Pirates," "Lost in a Comet's Tail," "Astray in the Selvas; or, The Wild Experiences of Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp, in South America With the Electric Cab," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE DISTINGUISHED TRAVELER—THE CHALLENGE— THE NEW AIR-SHIP.

"THERE'S one bit of latitude on the globe, I reckon, which you haven't visited, Cap'n Horn," remarked Ole Olson, the wooden-legged old tar, as he struck a match on his tarpaulin and ignited his stump of a pipe. "And," with a hitch at his reefer, "you ain't likely to visit it in this life I'm free to say."

"Eh, eh!" sputtered the fiery-nosed and bewhiskered recipient of this challenge. "You speak with an air of authority, sir. By guns, I'd like to know what it is? I've sailed the western, the eastern, the northern and the southern seas. I've hobnobbed with Kanakas, drank pulque with Mexicans, supped on reindeer meat with Alaskans, hunted tigers in India, swam the Amazon, and was lost two years in the heart of Africa, besides crossing Australia. Egad, sir! I'd like to know to what latitude you refer, sir?"

And the fire eating captain pounded the floor with the butt end of the cane, made from a spoke in a wheel of one of the cannons which riddled the French at Waterloo.

The scene was the smoking-room of the Veteran Soldiers' and Sailors' Club in the great city of New York. The time was the present day.

Fifty shot-riddled and battle-scarred heroes were assembled in the comfortable apartments, which from their characteristic furnishings, looked more like the interior of an arsenal than a club room.

They had just listened to a lengthy and exciting article on the great battle of Fort Donelson by Gen. Hooper Hines, one of the distinguished participants. It had been so strongly reminiscent of gunpowder, shredded flesh and splintered bone, that it had excited their war-like spirit and created a quantity of heroic enthusiasm wonderfully immense in volume.

Captain Horn was the distinguished president of the club.

His life had been one wonderful kaleidoscope of thrilling events. He could boast of wounds innumerable, and prided himself upon carrying four bullets in different parts of his anatomy which had been beyond the reach of the probe.

Captain Horn was strictly a hero. That was his adopted profession.

To any rash mortal who might seek to emulate the captain it might be well to state that it requires hundreds of dead men to make one hero of that type. Hence the success of one in that profession depends largely upon his luck in not slipping into a dead man's shoes. In that lamentable case he simply becomes a vulgar contribution to the success of some other aspiring hero.

But Captain Horn was one of the few who have run the gamut and

come out with breath in his body. Hence he was an established hero and had retired upon his laurels.

So what Captain Horn claimed was by no means bombast, but his legally. For that reason he was accorded much keen respect by his compatriots.

But among this contingent was the famous old sailor, Ole Olson—a native American with a Swedish name.

Ole had sailed in every sea on the face of the globe, under every civilized flag, and had fought his gun in many a hard naval battle. He had consecrated one leg to the cause of heroism.

Ole and the captain were warm friends, and yet the sailor was fond of eliminating conceit from his friend's composition. Horn was constantly bragging of his travels in every quarter of the globe. This was the prime cause of Olson's remark at the opening of this chapter.

"If you had a good chart here, sir," said Olson decidedly, "I could point out that latitude to you."

"Bless my soul!" sputtered the captain, "charts are plenty, and at hand, too; or, here is what is better yet—a globe, sir, a revolving globe on Mercator's projection."

The captain drew the globe across the table and whirled it around once or twice.

"Now, sir," he said pompously. "You shall prove your assertion, sir, or by heavens, I shall be compelled to regard it an aspersion on my honor as a traveler, sir, and challenge you to mortal combat."

"Tut, tut," said Olson, blowing a cloud of smoke in the captain's eyes and making him sneeze. "You've drank all the blood you'll ever drink and so have I. But that's not here nor there, I'm going to prove what I say."

"If you can, sir, I'll order a bottle of Madeira."

"Make your davy on that, mate. Put your finger on that. It's the eightieth parallel north."

"Yes," agreed the captain. "I spent two years up there in the ice hunting Walrus and had four Esquimaux wives. Go on!"

"All right," said Olson calmly. "We will go just ten degrees further north. What does that make the latitude? 90 degrees eh? Well, that's the latitude you have never visited."

The captain was silent a moment, then he said:

"That don't count, comrade."

"Yes, it does, shipmate."

"Eh? My assertion was, of course, specific, and embraced only that part of the earth inhabited by man."

"Ah, but there are inhabitants upon that Polar Continent, contiguous to 90 degrees north latitude, as is proved by drift and other evidences brought into the ice region by traverse currents. The Esquimaux make that assertion."

The captain passed a hand across his brow.



"Eh?" he muttered. "Where is that 90 degree north latitude? Is not that the Pole, comrade?"

"It is, my hearty."

"And you say that there is an inhabited continent there?"

"There is no doubt of it."

Captain Horn sat like one in a stupor for some moments. Then he arose and ambled up and down the room a couple of times.

When he paused, he leaned over the table, and said huskily to Olson:

"Comrade, I've lost five years of my life."

"Eh?" exclaimed Olson.

"I tell you I have. My life work is not done. I've been wasting my time at this club. I'm a fool."

Olson was astonished.

"Easy, mate!" he said, "trick your wheel a little to starboard. You're listing a bit to port."

"I'm not on an even keel, I'll admit," said Horn, solemnly, "but I will be afore two years. Let me tell you. When I was twenty-one and free, I made a sacred vow that before I died, I would visit every inhabited country on the face of the earth. When I joined this club and settled down here to end my days I firmly believed that I had carried out that vow. I now find that I have not."

"Nonsense!" said the old salt. "You've came nigh enough to the line, mate."

But Horn shook his head.

"No," he said, slowly; "90 deg. north! An inhabited continent. Ah!"

"Well, you're safe anyway," said Olson, with a laugh, "for no man living can get there."

"Well," said Horn, with a gasping breath, "however that is I've got to keep my vow. I've got to go there."

Olson gave a start.

"Steady, cap'en!" he said, "take a bit of a reef. You don't mean to say that you intend to visit latitude 90 degrees?"

Horn nodded in a vague way.

"On my honor as a gentleman," he said.

"Impossible!"

"It must be so."

"But you can't."

"But I will."

Olson puffed and blowed a moment like a porpoise, and then cried: "But you shan't!"

"I will!"

The two old timers glared at each other in the most antagonistic way. The air began to actually smell of gunpowder.

"Then," said Olson, grandiloquently, "then—on my honor—if you will be such a fool—why I'm sworn to be in at your death. I'll go with you!"

Horn glared at his friend.

"Well, I'm sworn that you won't!" he said solidly.

For a full minute the two doughty heroes stood fiercely confronting each other.

"Until now, Captain Horn, I always thought you a man of honor," said Olson.

"And I can say the same of you, sir," retorted Horn.

"I'm insulted, sir, and you must fight me."

"It shall be so, but you'll have to meet me in latitude 90 deg., sir. I wish you good-day."

"Wait! I accept. I will meet you in latitude 90 deg., and challenge you to mortal combat there."

"It is settled!"

"Good-day, sir!"

"Au revoir!"

Captain Horn gave one last glare at his compatriot, and then ambled out of the club house. He at once made his way down to West street.

He entered the office of a well known firm of ship owners. He saluted the head member of the firm, whose name was Ham.

He stated his errand briefly. The ship owner listened respectfully. Captain Horn was a man of great wealth. Mr. Ham began to suspect that the captain was mentally touched, and wondered how he should get rid of him. He knew that it was impossible to send a vessel to latitude 90 deg. Suddenly a happy thought struck him.

"On my word, Horn," he said, "do you want to go there a quicker way?"

"What is it comrade?" asked the captain.

"By air-ship!"

Horn looked astonished.

"By air-ship?" he gasped.

"Yes, haven't you heard the latest? Frank Reade, Jr., the greatest inventor in the world, is about to start on a voyage of discovery to the North Pole in his new air-ship!"

"By guns!" gasped the captain, "to the North Pole in an air-ship. Well, that will just be the episode to crown my life of adventure. Hooray! I'll go it. Where shall I find this man and his air-ship?"

"At his great machine works in Readestown. You had better telegraph him at once that you are coming."

The captain embraced Ham and then rushed to a Western Union office. He at once wrote a dispatch.

Thus it was worded:

FRANK READE, JR.,  
Readestown, U. S. A.

DEAR SIR,—I must accompany you on your trip to Latitude 90 de-

grees. I have a vow to fulfill. Will pay you any sum you name for the privilege. Wire me at once.

Yours expectantly,

CAPTAIN OBADIAH HORN.

The captain waited for fully an hour for the answer. When it came he received a great shock.

Thus it read:

CAPTAIN OBADIAH HORN:

We are sorry to inform you that Mr. Frank Reade, Jr., and his two men, Barney and Pomp, left here on the morning of the 24th in the air ship Shooting Star, bound for Hudson's Bay, North Greenland, and the regions of the North Pole.

With deep regrets,

JONATHAN ADAMS, Secretary.

The captain was too much of an old hero, however, to let this first wave of defeat daunt him. Back he went down to Ham's office.

He was resolved to get under way at once for the North Pole, even if he had to buy a ship and crew to do it with. This was truly a heroic spirit.

## CHAPTER II.

### AT READESTOWN—THE START—HO, FOR THE NORTH POLE!

A FEW days before the incidents occurred, which we have just recorded, there was a great stir in the little city of Readestown.

Frank Reade, Jr.'s new air-ship, the Shooting Star, had just been finished, and such a great triumph was it that the young inventor was constrained to issue invitations to all his friends to dine with him aboard the air ship previous to his departure for the North Pole.

Of course a large crowd attended, and the affair was in every way a glorious success.

There were after dinner speeches, toasts and bon mots galore. It was an event for Readestown.

Everybody was interested in the projected trip to the North Pole. Frank received hundreds of letters from various scientists and explorers eagerly craving the privilege of accompanying the young inventor upon his aerial trip.

But to all of these Frank gave an emphatic denial. His only companions were to be his two faithful men, Barney and Pomp.

Barney was a genuine Irishman with a jolly brogue and a comical mug. Pomp was a darky with jet black skin and the essence of fun.

Both were skilled mechanics, electricians, as well as possessing accomplishments without number qualifying them for the life of adventure, they at times led.

They had accompanied Frank upon many a perilous trip and their devotion to their young master was remarkable. Frank put full dependence upon them.

The Shooting Star was certainly a remarkable example of mechanical skill and ingenious construction.

The problem of aerial navigation is no light one, but Frank Reade, Jr., had mastered it as he had many another. The result was the Shooting Star.

He had taken partly as a model an old-time galley ship with its high after deck and depth of hull. The lines of the Shooting Star were symmetrically upon this pattern.

The ship's hull was constructed of extremely light but bullet proof plates of light metal, an alloy, the secret of which Frank possessed, which was far superior to aluminum.

The bow of the ship might be said to be a double one, projecting beyond the base of the bowsprit, and leaving a small deck beneath it, which was railed, and upon which was mounted a pneumatic dynamite gun, Frank's peculiar invention. This gun was of thin metal, being merely a discharging tube for the projectile of dynamite. With it the most deadly of destruction could be accomplished.

Along the main deck, fore and aft, there extended a guard rail. Windows and portholes punctured the hull of the aerial vessel at regular intervals.

Above the main deck arose the dome roof of the main cabin. This had large skylights of glass, and just forward of the mainmast was a search-light of great power.

Forward of this cabin was the pilot house, where was the steering gear and the electric keyboard by which the air-ship was controlled.

Aft was the after cabin and poop deck. Three revolving masts of steel rose from the air ship's hull. Each of these supported a rotascope of immense breadth and power.

These furnished the means of suspension in the air, and they were extremely powerful. They were operated by electrical engines in the hold of the air ship.

At the stern was the huge propeller, made of wings of thin aluminum. This could be driven at great speed.

With this meager description of the exterior of the Shooting Star, let us take a look at the interior.

The main cabin of the ship, or the one under the dome, was furnished with rare magnificence. It was a small palace in its details.

Everything it contained was of the most expensive kind, and yet there was little of the superfluous. Almost every article had been devised with a view to some practical use upon the voyage.

The pilot house was just forward of the main cabin, and communicated with it by means of a vestibule. Its appointments consisted of the steering wheel and electric keyboard which controlled the machinery.

The observation cabin, as it was called, was aft, and from its broad windows of plate glass a sweeping view was always to be had.



## CHAPTER III.

ACROSS THE ST. LAWRENCE—IN RUPERT LAND—THE GIANT ELK.

Then there was the hold, well stored with provisions and equipments. The engine-room and machinery with the dynamos and system of storage. The staterooms and galley for cooking with all their necessary equipments.

It must be understood that the air-ship cost, besides mental ingenuity and time, much money to build and equip. But Frank Reade, Jr., was a comparatively wealthy young man, his income from his many inventions being quite enormous.

So he could well afford to build an air-ship and travel to the North Pole with it.

All was in readiness for the start upon the great trip.

Had Frank postponed it a few days he would have certainly received Captain Horn's message, and it might have made a great change in his plans.

But he sailed at the appointed hour. A large crowd saw the air-ship take its flight from Readestown.

Frank stood on the deck and waved the American flag to the cheering crowd. Barney and Pomp were in the pilot-house operating the key board.

The moment the Shooting Star leaped into the air, it was seen that she was a success.

She could easily master the strongest currents of air, save, of course, a hurricane, and obeyed every impulse of her navigators.

Straight to the northward she sailed. Soon Readestown was left out of sight.

The air-ship was two miles from the earth, and just below a bank of drifting clouds.

Barney lashed wheel and with Pomp came out on deck.

They began throwing flip-flops and turning somersaults in their exuberance and delight.

"Hi dar!" sang out the dorky. "I kin turn mo' ob dese flings dan yo' kin, I ish."

"Divil a bit, raygur!" retorted Barney. "I kin trow double ones, which yez can't do fer the loife av yez!"

"Huh! don' yo' be so suah. See dat?"

And Pomp came within an ace of vaulting over the rail. It would have been quite a serious thing for him if he had descended that distance to the earth.

This sobered the two jokers, and they desisted in their practice.

"Golly, Marse Frank," said Pomp, saluting the young inventor, "we's jes' climbin' right along, sah. I reckon we am goin' fo'ty miles an hour."

"About that, Pomp," agreed Frank. "At this rate before to-morrow we ought to be in Canada."

"Glory! dat am fine! I done fink we see de Canucks den, sah."

"We will get a very elevated view of them surely," said Frank.

"We will cross the St. Lawrence before dark, I hope."

"Begorra, it's a moighty harrud lukin' counthry, I'm thinkin', from phwat I've iver seen av it," declared Barney. "What wid shtump finces an' ould scraggly woods, it's a place fit to give a mon a noightmare. Now there's Oireland, it's so green an' fresh that it's a rare gem in the say. Shure there's no counthry anywhere loike the ould sod."

"That is what the Irishmen think!" laughed Frank.

"Shure, sor, an' it's natural they should."

"Oh, certainly! I have little respect for a man who will not stand up for the land of his birth."

"Whurroo! only for ould England ye'd see Oireland foremost among the people av the earth," cried Barney, vigorously. "Some day yez will see the harp hang high in Tara's halls agin. Moind yer eye!"

It was an interesting panorama they were passing over.

There were lakes, rivers, mountains and valleys, villages, hamlets and cities. Still on sailed the air-ship.

It was sunset when Frank said:

"At this rate we shall cross the St. Lawrence at midnight. As I am anxious to see its Thousand Isles by daylight we will lay to until morning."

Accordingly speed was checked, and the air-ship floated among the clouds. For diversion, as soon as it became dark enough the search-light was used.

Its rays were thrown down into a village street. The result was interesting to note.

The people gathered in a great crowd, and a scene of the most intense excitement followed.

At that height, and in the face of the light's blinding glare, the air-ship could not be seen. Doubtless the blinding light was to many of them an inexplicable phenomenon.

After some while spent thus in testing the search light, the air-ship drifted out of range.

It was pleasant pastime to sit upon the deck and enjoy the cool evening air, for it was a sultry night below.

To add to the enjoyment of the moment, Pomp brought out his banjo and Barney his Irish fiddle.

Plantation melodies and Irish ballads whiled the hours away until midnight. Then Frank and Pomp retired for the night. Barney being on guard in his turn.

MORNING came at last and speed was again resumed. The day bid fair to be a pleasant one.

Before noon Frank declared that they would cross the St. Lawrence. His prediction came true.

The great river was crossed in the region of the Thousand Isles. It was an impressive scene.

Great rafts of lumber were upon the broad surface of the river. Steamers were traveling up and down, and the summer resorts were crowded. It could be seen that the air-ship created excitement.

Across the St. Lawrence the country began rapidly to undergo a change.

Settlements took the place of villages and towns with graded streets. The dwellings became more primitive and few and far between.

Indications of the great wilderness to come were seen.

All that day the air-ship sailed on, then Frank veered the course a little more to the West, and said:

"We shall now very soon be in Rupert Land, and the region of the fur hunters and traders."

"Dat might jes' be a good chance fo' us to get in some good huntin', Marse Frank," declared Pomp.

"Yes," agreed the young inventor. "And if the opportunity offers we will do so."

This was something for Barney and Pomp to look forward to, and accordingly they were upon the qui vive.

And it could very easily be seen that the region they were now passing over was a rare one for game.

The country was wild, and dense forests with grass grown prairies were everywhere. In the forests there were bear and deer and moose, and upon the prairies antelope and any quantity of winged game, such as partridge and quail.

"Truly this is the Paradise of the hunter," cried Frank; "the supply of game here seems inexhaustible."

"It do dat, Marse Frank," agreed Pomp. "Couldn't neber shoot it all."

"Ah, I am not so sure of that," said Frank. "Every year the sportsmen from civilization are pushing deeper and deeper into the wilderness. Very little game escapes them."

"Begorra, it's a blasted shame!" averred Barney, "shure they ought niver to hunt it so much!"

"Oh, the demands of civilization are inexorable," declared Frank; "everything wild and untamed disappears before it. Only think! Not many hundred years ago the isle of Manhattan, upon which stands the great city of New York to-day was a howling wilderness. Bears and wolves had their dens among the rocky clefts, now perpetuated by landscape gardeners in Central Park. The wild Indian's wigwam no doubt was once pitched where now stands the palatial Waldorf and the residences of millionaires."

"Bejabers that seems queer enuff," declared Barney, "that must 'ave been about the time the O'Sheas were kings av Oireland. Bad cess to the change!"

"And why?" laughed Frank. "You cannot wish Manhattan back to its primitive wilderness and the abode of howling beasts and savages?"

"Divil a bit!" returned the Celt, "but if Oireland had her roights, shure, she'd niver be under the yoke av ould England to-day."

"It is all the result of civilization," declared Frank; "everything gives way before its march."

"Shure, the Oirish were civilized, sor, whin England took away their liberty."

"Yes, but the English were superior or they could not have done it," declared Frank.

Here the subject was brought to a close in an exciting manner.

Pomp had gone to the rail and was looking down upon the country below. Suddenly he gave a sharp cry.

"Shure, phwat's the matter wid yez?" cried Barney, as he sprung to his side. But a glance was enough.

"Golly! jes' cast yo' eye at dat," exclaimed the dorky.

All saw what was really a picture worthy an artist. Upon a ledge of rock, high above tops of a forest of pines, there stood a mighty specimen of the lordly elk.

And right lordly he was, too, as he stood there with feet firmly planted, nostrils blowing and eyes fixed full upon the air-ship above it.

The creature did not seem alarmed, but wholly the victim of curiosity, the predominating trait of the deer tribe.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Frank; "what a magnificent specimen of elk!"

Barney's eye glittered.

"Whisht now an' I'll bag him!" he cried, as he started for his rifle. "Will yez wait the air-ship, Misther Frank?"

"Of course," replied Frank.

"Hol' on dar, honey!" cried Pomp. "I reckon it am my shot! I seen de animle fas' off!"

"Shoot thin, and be hanged to yez!" cried Barney; "divil a bit do I care for that!"

"I kain't shoot wif yo' rifle. De sight don' fit mah eyes," said Pomp; "go on an' shoot yo'sef."

"Do yez mane it?"

"I does."

"All roight thin."



Barney flung his rifle to his shoulder. He drew quick aim at the elk and fired.

The elk fell across the ledge dead on the instant. But this fact was not what caused the three voyagers a mighty start.

"Mither presarve us! Phwat the divil was that?" ejaculated Barney.

All were gazing down into the wooded valley below. For a moment they searched the place with critical gaze.

"On mah wo'd!" exclaimed Pomp, "I done fo't I heerd some one shoot away down dere!"

"Bejabers, it was the report av another gun!" declared Barney. "I'll stake me loife on it!"

"Oh, I guess not," said Frank, carelessly. "It must have been the echo of your shot."

And this conclusion was therefore accepted, though it must be said reluctantly by Barney and Pomp.

However, the game was bagged, and it was now in order to secure it. So the air ship descended.

A good spot was selected upon which to make a landing. The air ship rested upon the rocky ledge. Frank stayed by the wheel, while Barney and Pomp leaped over the rail to secure the elk.

As it would be a heavy load to carry, they decided not to take the animal bodily aboard, but to cut it up where it was.

So procuring sharp knives, they set to work.

They had succeeded in half flaying the elk, when a startling thing occurred.

The sound of harsh voices and feet was heard coming up from among the trees.

Instantly Barney and Pomp started up.

"Wha' am dat?" exclaimed the darky.

"Begorra, some wan is comin'!"

"Who am it?"

"Kain't say."

"Wha' am we gwine to do?"

"Stay here, of course."

Frank, who was on deck, started up and came to the rail. He was just in time to see a motley gang of men burst into view from the forest.

They were dark browed, bewhiskered men of the frontier type. Their leader was a giant in frame.

All were armed to the teeth, and their manner was distinctively aggressive. A sort of hoarse cry went up as they saw the elk in the hands of Barney and Pomp.

Then they advanced in an ominous way, displaying their guns. Barney and Pomp picked up their rifles and cocked them.

"Fo' de lan's sakes!" exclaimed Pomp, "dey act as if dey was gwine to gib us a fight."

"Begorra, I don't loike the looks av 'em, naygnr. Look out they don't git atween us an' ther air-ship!"

"Yo' kin jes' bet on dat."

Seeing that the Irishman and negro were armed the leader of the frontiersmen paused. He exchanged a few words with his men, and then advancing a step hailed the two hunters.

"I say, strawngers, what are ye doin' in these parts?"

"We're on honest business, sor, yez kin make shure av that," replied Barney; "that's the best we have to say to yez."

"Oh, it is, eh? Well, it's my business to know if ye've any right here."

"Any roight," retorted Barney. "As good as yures, I'm thinkin'."

"Yer wrong thar, me friend," replied the frontiersman. "We are officers of the law, an' represent the queen on whose territory you ar' poaching."

Barney and Pomp exchanged glances. But before either could reply, Frank called attention to himself.

"Then you represent the queen, my friend?" he asked, politely.

"In course we do," replied the frontiersman in a harsh voice. "An' yew'll find out so, too. I am under orders to arrest or shoot anybody from the States who is caught without a license shooting anywhere in Rupert's Land."

"Before we go any further," said Frank, calmly, "I want you to show me your commission. I don't believe the queen would acknowledge you as a representative."

"Do you mean to insult me?" blustered the big ruffian.

"Not a bit of it," replied Frank, coolly. "We are in a big wilderness here where it is difficult to enforce law, even if there was any law. Just inform me how you are going to prove to me that you represent the queen."

"Wall, I ain't goin' to try to. I'm in the employ of ther Hudson's Bay Company, that has a charter from ther Queen, which is one and ther same thing."

"Ah, I thought so," said Frank with a smile. "The Hudson's Bay Company is a great monopoly, but I don't see how it is going to prevent our taking that elk which we have just shot."

The frontiersman gave utterance to an astonished oath.

"Which you just shot!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Frank.

"Wall, I'll be darned! I shot that elk myself! It's my property, and yew ain't a-going to steal it—not if I know it!"

"You shot it!" exclaimed Frank, while Barney and Pomp looked astounded.

"Yes, sir, I shot it!" averred the frontiersman positively. "I was over yender in the valley an' drew a bead on it. I couldn't have missed it at that range, and I ain't goin' to have yew steal it—not if I know it!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FUR HUNTERS—ON AN ICE-BERG—DUCK HUNTING.

For a moment our adventurers could hardly believe their senses. Then Barney cried:

"Begorra, don't yez remember that we heerd a shot over there in the valley, and we were afther thinkin' it an echo fer shure?"

"Golly! dat am so!" cried Pomp.

"Right!" cried Frank, "hold on, Mr. What's-your-name! It is possible that we are mistaken. If the elk is yours you shall have him."

"Of course, he's mine. I hit him fair and plump!"

"Be jabers, so did I," averred Barney.

"Did yew fire at him, Micky?" asked the frontiersman, facing Barney.

"Shure, I did."

"So did I."

"I believe yez."

"P'raps both of us hit him."

"That's the talk!" cried Frank, "look and see."

"By the horn spoon!" cried the Canadian, who had now changed his manner when he saw how matters were, "if my bullet didn't kill him he's yours."

He advanced, and with Barney made an examination of the dead elk.

One bullet had entered the brain.

"That ain't mine," declared the Canadian. "I fired fer ther heart."

A quick examination showed that a bullet had also penetrated the heart. Each bullet had struck a vital part.

For a moment silence reigned. Then the Canadian said:

"Take him! I reckin yew fired a second afore me!"

"No!" cried Frank, "let us compromise. We will take the meat and you can have the skin!"

"That's all I wanted anyway," replied the frontiersman.

"Then it's satisfactory?"

"In course!"

"Good!" cried Frank. "We will part then on friendly terms."

The Canadian, who gave his name as Archie Campbell, now came up to the air-ship's rail and talked with Frank. He was quite cordial.

"In course the company don't keer anything about one elk," he said; "if it had been a black fox or a beaver I might have felt different. I was only givin' ye a bluff anyway. But ye kain't know how 'sprised we all wuz when we seen this flying ship. We couldn't believe our eyes fer a minit."

"Indeed!" laughed Frank,

"We thought each one of us had the tremens, but finally we 'lowed that it was some trick of ther cussed ingenious Yankees. Flyin' in ther air! Joppa! What will ye be doin' next?"

"Oh, we haven't reached the end of our tether yet," laughed Frank.

"Come aboard and I'll gladly show you over the ship."

Campbell complied. It is safe to say that he had some wonderful yarns to give his companions afterwards.

So it came to pass that the aerial voyagers and the Hudson Bay men parted the best of friends. As soon as the elk meat was brought aboard, the Shooting Star once more got under way.

Soon the locality was left far behind. Then Barney asked Frank what the course would be.

"We will bear off east of James Bay," he said, "and strike for the northern part of Labrador; thence we will cross Baffins Bay for North Greenland."

"All right, sor," and Barney marked the course.

Once more the Shooting Star was in the clouds.

The air was growing more chill, and gave evidence that they were leaving temperate latitudes behind.

This was to be expected.

For days the air ship sailed on over Rupert Land. One day a great body of water showed to the north-west.

"James Bay!" exclaimed Frank. "I wish we had time to visit it."

"An' why not, sor?" asked Barney.

"There are many good reasons," said Frank. "The most important one is the limited life of the air ship."

"Phwat's that, sor?"

"The Shooting Star, like a railroad locomotive, can only run so many thousand miles before it must wear out entirely. The life of the machinery is limited, as electrical machinery is very delicate. The Shooting Star is good for just about this trip. She could never go another."

"I understand, sor," replied Barney. "Av we go too many miles around we will never have strength enough left in the machinery to git home with, sor."

"Just so, for it, like everything else, must wear out."

So James Bay was left to the northwest. The air-ship now was called upon to cross the bleakest, most God-forsaken country any in the party had ever seen.

It was a long ways from James Bay across to the upper end of Labrador, which is on the sixtieth parallel of north latitude.

But in due time the air-ship made the distance and headed north for the mouth of Hudson's Strait, which is the true entrance to Hudson's Bay.

Here the voyagers soon found themselves entering Davis Strait and on the Arctic Circle.

The scene now underwent a great change.

Icebergs and flocs were common, and there were all the indications that they were approaching the Arctic regions.



Barney and Pomp were quite excited, and each was eager to catch the first glimpse of the polar bear. Seals and whales were visible in abundance.

It was the season of Arctic summer, and consequently the straits were not frozen over, but were open and the air was quite mild.

It was deemed best not to put on furs yet, though the voyagers increased the thickness of their clothing somewhat. Sailing over one of the biggest icebergs, Barney cried:

"Shure, Misther Frank, we ought to discind and have a shot at some of the foine ducks down there."

"Indeed, I believe you're right, Barney," said the young inventor, with sudden inspiration.

The berg was in fact more than a berg, it was a huge floating island of ice.

There was a deep depression in its center and here among the pinnacles of crystal was a lake of water which the voyagers could see now was not in any way connected with the sea.

In this water, which was probably almost fresh, there were myriads of ducks and geese and even swans.

They were floundering about and having a great racket. The nearness of the air-ship did not seem to disturb them at all.

With Frank in the majority of cases impulse was action.

It did not take him long to make up his mind.

In a jiffy the air-ship was settling down upon a level spot high up near the summit of the berg and full fifty feet above the water.

Here the Shooting Star rested safely enough upon an icy platform. Then anchors were thrown out and the voyagers prepared for the hunt.

As there was no danger of an attack upon the air-ship by a lurking foe, it was deemed safe enough for all to leave the ship, and this they accordingly did.

Frank led the way over the slippery surface among the ice pinnacles. There was constant danger of slipping and getting a severe fall.

Once Barney did take a headlong slide of twenty feet, but a bank of snow made his bruises slight.

"Golly, I done fink we orter hab nails in our shoes," declared Pomp; "den we mought hab some lily chance to stan' up!"

"Begorra, it's as slippery as the greased pole at Donnybrook!" averred Barney. "Shure ye're niver shure av phwat's comin' next."

However, after a tortuous course the three hunters reached a small platform under an ice canopy with a thin breastwork before them. This was not a dozen feet above the basin where were the ducks.

No better chance could have been desired. The birds were all within easy call.

It was easy enough to draw a line on the best of them with the shotguns they carried.

Frank made the plan.

"You take that line to the left, Barney," he said. "Pomp, take the right, and I will take them when they rise."

This was done.

Indeed, so rapidly did they work, and so numerous were the birds, that before the pond was cleared, they had made three sharp rounds of firing, and nearly two score of the feathered game lay upon the shores of the basin.

It was a remarkably successful job, and the hunters were in high spirits.

"Shure, they kin niver beat us fer the huntin' av ducks!" cried Barney. "Wud yez luk at the loikes av thim!"

"Golly, dis beats de duck shooting down in ole Okeefnokee Swamp," declared Pomp. "Wha' am we gwine to do now?"

"Take our game aboard the Star," declared Frank. "What with elk meat and ducks, we ought to live well."

"Yez are roight," cried Barney. "Come on, naygur, and pick up the burruds."

The ducks were now picked up and classified. There were several different species. Then back to the air ship went the hunters.

The hunt had been a success. Thus far the aerial voyage had been like a pleasure excursion.

But from this moment dated incidents and events of a rapid and thrilling sort. The voyagers were sure to remember their trip to the Pole.

They had hardly mounted the air-ship's deck when Barney, chancing to glance seaward, gave a great cry.

"Begorra, wud yez look!" he cried. "There's a foine ship on foire!"

Instantly all eyes were upon the thrilling scene. Distant about two miles was a schooner-rigged vessel. Flames were seen leaping from her deck.

At first Frank was of the opinion that these flames came from the furnace pipes of a whaler trying out oil. But a second glance told him different.

She was not the cut or rig of a whaling vessel. Moreover it could be seen that the flames had involved her rigging.

A great gasp of horror escaped Frank's lips.

"My soul!" he exclaimed, "it is really a vessel on fire. She is doomed to certain destruction."

## CHAPTER V.

### CAPTAIN HORN PUTS TO SEA—THE STOWAWAY—THE CRY OF FIRE.

IN our desire to follow the adventures of the air-ship and its crew, we have neglected the no less interesting experiences of other characters of our story.

Captain Obadiah Horn was much chagrined of course to find that he was just too late to embark with Frank Reade, Jr., for the pole aboard his famous air ship.

But this did not deter the old traveler one whit in his stubborn purpose.

He was resolute in his determination to visit the North Pole as the only part of the habitable earth he had not paid a visit to.

Captain Horn was fertile in expedient. He was a good skipper himself and knew the art of navigation by heart.

"By my ears!" he muttered, "I'll never be beat; if I have to build a ship I'll get there!"

So back down to Ham's office he stumped.

The ship owner was astonished and not a little perplexed to see him back.

"How is this?" he explained. "Can't you make a hitch with Mr. Reade?"

"Make a hitch?" echoed the old traveler. "Nor any kind of a hail. He has gone some days to the Pole!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Ham, in dismay, "you were too late!"

"That's it!"

"Then you have sensibly decided to abandon the project for now?"

"Never!"

"Eh!"

"I'm more than ever determined to go. Ah, you don't know Obadiah Horn. I'll go now if it breaks my neck to git there."

"Mercy! I hope no such a calamity as that will occur. But how are you going?"

"With a ship."

"Impossible!"

"How so?"

"The thing has been tried times without number. But in every case the vessel has been nipped in the ice and proved a failure."

"That may be," said Horn doggedly; "but there's always a time to succeed, comrade. I am the one to do that. Now to business!"

"Well?"

"I want the best sailing vessel you have got. Mind ye, not a ship of the line, but a good fast schooner."

Ham writhed.

"I don't see how I can," he began.

But Horn in a big voice brought his hand down with crashing force and said:

"Don't be a fool, Ham. You know that I can buy and pay for any ship that you have. Let it go at that. I'll ship my own crew and take all risks."

"Well," said Ham slowly, "it looks to me like a foolhardy attempt."

"Don't say a word more. You know that when I undertake a thing I never quit. I'm going through. Here's my check for thirty thousand. That'll pay for the use of your schooner!"

Captain Obadiah waved his check book, but Ham said:

"Never mind that till you come back. Of course you shall have the vessel. I'd never refuse you, Horn. Now, there's the Advance——"

"I know her. Nice trappy and stanch little vessel. She'll do. I'll take her at once. Where is she?"

"Out there at the wharf."

"Any cargo aboard her?"

"Not a bit. We just lifted the last cask out of her hold."

"That settles it. I'll put a crew aboard her in a day's time. Oh, I tell you I'm no hand to procrastinate, sir."

"I can see that," said Ham, lugubriously; "but I must regard your undertaking as a foolhardy one. We shall never see you or the ship again."

"You'll get your pay for the ship, comrade," asserted the old traveler stoutly. "As for me, I'm proud to die in just such an attempt. It's a fitting way for a man who has traveled as much as I have, sir. Now I wish you a good-day, sir."

And the captain stormed out of the ship owner's office. He made his way hastily up town.

It did not take him long to adjust his affairs so that he could easily leave home. Then he set out to find his crew.

While on his way to a seaman's headquarters in West street, who should he run into but Olson. The old sailor got squarely in his way.

"Ahoy, mate!" cried Olson. "Where is your course laid now? You're headed sou' by sou'west. That'll bring you up at the wharves, me hearty."

"And that's where I'm going, my man," replied Horn, pompously.

"Ah, indeed, and you are really in earnest about this foolhardy trip to the Pole?"

"Of course I am."

"Well," said Olson, rubbing his hands and shifting his quid from one cheek to the other, "of course you've reconsidered your decision not to ship me in your company?"

Horn glared at the presumptuous old salt.

"No, sir!" he thundered. "You can't ship with me. That's the end of it, sir. Good-day, sir!"

And he brushed past Olson and bustled on his way. But the sailor's words came floating to his ears.



"Never mind, me hearty! I'll meet you at the North Pole and settle that affair of honor if I have to charter a ship myself to go there."

"Humph!" muttered Captain Obadiah to himself. "He's just fool enough to do that. Well, if he does, I'll fight him, that's all."

It did not take the doughty captain long to pick up his crew. He was something of a sailor himself, but would never have dared to navigate the Advance on his own responsibility.

Really it would have been wise for him to take Olson, who was a perfect seaman. But the eccentric idea which had gained possession of him prevented this.

So he selected an old whaling skipper, who was familiar with the northern seas, to command the vessel.

The Advance was quickly fitted out for the cruise. There were provisions for several years placed aboard.

Horn had no clear idea as to how he was to reach the Pole.

To make the start now engrossed all his attention. He was willing to trust to chance and fertility of resource for the rest.

The schooner, as a result, was soon manned and ready to sail. The Advance was Ham's favorite ship, and he looked at it ruefully as it lay at the wharf.

"She will never come back," he muttered—"at least, I don't see what will bring her back?"

In less than two days of actual preparation the Advance sailed out of New York Harbor on her north bound cruise.

For several days she made rapid progress to the northward, favoring gales assisting her much.

Then one day, when well up into the Northern seas, and too far from a port to turn back for any ordinary purpose, Captain Obadiah went on deck to behold an astounding spectacle.

Seated by the mainmast was a familiar form.

He rubbed his eyes.

"Shades of Waterloo?" he muttered; "am I dreaming?"

There was no doubting the case. The individual before him was the old salt Olson.

The latter looked at Horn with a grin and said:

"Well, mate, it's a nice voyage we're having."

"Swords and muskets!" gasped Horn in sheer dismay, "how did you get here?"

"Well," replied Olson. "I've been here all the while. Did you think I dropped from the clouds?"

"Been here all the while?"

"Yes, that is, aboard the ship."

Horn drew a deep breath.

"Then you stowed yourself away somewhere until after we got out to sea?"

Olson nodded coolly.

"That's the size of it," he declared. "It was my only course, if I was to make sure of settling that affair of honor with you at the Pole."

Horn began to roll up his sleeves.

"Then we'll settle it now," he began. But Olson put up a hand.

"Not till we get to the Pole, mate, then it's cutlasses for weapons. I have the choice as you well know, for I am the challenged party."

"But—you've no right aboard my ship. I decline your company!"

"Yes, I know, but you see I took pity on you," laughed Olson. "I knew that your skipper would lose himself in the icebergs of the northern seas, so I came along to give you the benefit of my advice."

Obadiah grunted in a non-committal way, and made for the cabin. He was really delighted that Olson was along with him, but he would not tell the old salt this.

And indeed Olson easily earned his passage.

Without his guidance and advice, the schooner might have been wrecked or ripped many times, but each time he directed the course safely.

And thus the trim little schooner plowed on its northern way, until one day Captain Obadiah declared that they were on the Arctic Circle.

Then a thrilling thing occurred. One day the cry so awful and exciting at sea, rang through the ship.

Fire, fire!

It was a deadly and agonizing cry. It brought every man to the deck.

The schooner was really on fire. The crew worked like madmen to put it out, but they could not. It speedily gained the mastery.

So swift was the destruction of the schooner that it seemed but a brief instant ere her decks blew up, her masts toppled and water rushed into her hold.

This quenched the flames, but sealed the fate of the crew. Overboard in the icy waters there was little chance for life.

Captain Obadiah and Olson gave themselves up for lost. They, however, did not leap overboard.

But, driven by the flames to the very stern of the doomed vessel, they awaited what seemed to them their certain fate.

"Lord help us, mate!" cried Olson. "We've got our final call. You'll never see the North Pole."

But even as he spoke Obadiah gave a great start.

"By muskets!" he cried. "What do ye call that over yonder? Can I see straight, comrade?"

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE RESCUE—A REMINDER OF THE CHALLENGE.

It was at this critical moment that the aerial voyagers on the iceberg had made action.

For the burning vessel which they saw was synonymous with the Advance. It was true that ship owner Ham in New York was never to see his pet schooner again.

"Begorra, Misther Frank," Barney had cried, "we ought to be aither doin' something fer the poor sows on board."

"I see no survivors," said Frank. "Oh, yes, there are two men at the extreme stern of the vessel."

Frank lost no time.

He sprang to the keyboard. In a moment the air ship was soaring upward. And it was at that supreme moment that Captain Horn indulged in the exclamation which closes our previous chapter.

In an instant the old soldier and traveler saw that deliverance was to be theirs.

He knew that the air ship was Frank Reade, Jr.'s, and a thousand wild thoughts flashed across his mind. It looked to him indeed like a strange dispensation of Fate.

"Olson, old friend!" he cried, "we are saved!"

The old salt was gazing at the air-ship in sheer amazement.

"What!" he gasped. "A ship sailing in the air?"

"That is Frank Reade, Jr., and his air-ship, and they are coming down to rescue us!" cried Horn excitedly. "We are sure to get to the North Pole now! Great guns! how hot that fire is!"

"We'd better leap overboard," suggested Olson.

"No, that would be death in these cold waters. Don't you see that we are the only survivors?"

This was a fearful truth.

The luckless crew of the Advance had perished every one, either in the flames or in the icy waters, which chilled them to the marrow and prevented their swimming or keeping afloat.

The two members of the Veterans' Club were the only survivors. It was a strange working of fate.

And they were survivors only owing to the fact that they had stuck by the burning ship. The air-ship was near at hand.

There was need of quick work. The Advance showed signs of sinking.

Frank leaning over the rail, shouted:

"Ahoy, down there!"

"Ahoy, mates!" returned Olson.

"Are you the only men aboard?"

"We are," replied Captain Obadiah; "I am sorry to say that the others have perished, and that will be our fate unless we have help soon."

"Have good courage. We won't let you burn up."

"Luk out fer the rope!" shouted Barney, flinging a line down; "put it around yez!"

"All right, me hearty," cried Olson. "It's done already. Pull away!"

Barney and Pomp at the other end quickly pulled Olson up and over the air-ship's rail. Then Captain Obadiah followed likewise.

It was necessary to keep a sharp eye out for the flames, for there was great danger that they might do harm to the air-ship.

But this was happily avoided and the two rescued men stood safe and sound on the air-ship's deck.

They gripped hands with Frank and introduced themselves.

First of all a lookout was kept for somewhere for any other survivor of the burning ship. But none were found.

Then Captain Obadiah told the story of their presence in these waters to Frank.

He explained his object in visiting the North Pole, and Olson's object in following him.

Then he narrated his trip to Readestown and his disappointment at learning that Frank had sailed without him.

"I am willing to pay any price to get to the North Pole," he said.

"And with an air-ship it is a sure thing to get there. Name your price, captain."

"I have no price, sir," said Frank; "I do not take passengers. But as I cannot very well land you in these deserted latitudes, I must perforce accept you as such."

Captain Obadiah was profuse in his gratitude. Frank at once took a liking to the bluff old traveler, and they became warm friends.

Barney and Pomp fraternized at once with Olson.

"After all," said Frank, "I am glad that it has so happened. There will be no danger of our being lonesome on this great trip."

"We will try and give you no occasion to feel so, comrade," declared Captain Obadiah. "I am done traveling with this cruise. Just let me set foot on Polar land and I am satisfied."

"It looks as if you would get your desire," said Frank.

Pomp got up a great dinner with the fine string of ducks secured on the berg.

Both Obadiah and Olson were hungry and did justice to the spread. But one thing palled upon their joy.

This was the sad fate of the crew of the Advance.

"By muskets, it is too bad!" cried Obadiah; "if they hadn't been so rash in leaping overboard they would have been rescued too. Poor chaps!"

"That is so," agreed Olson, "but could the air ship have carried so many?"

"It could have carried them," declared Frank, "but I would have



been obliged to take you all back to Labrador or the nearest seaport, for I could not have taken so many on my voyage to the Pole."

"That is reasonable," said Obadiah; "it was a stroke of fate. I remember now that Ham declared that the Advance would never return. He was a prophet."

Barney meanwhile had headed the air ship up Davis Straits.

For several days it journeyed on over the icy seas, then finally entered upon the ice fields of Baffins Bay.

They were now really in the Arctic. One day Obadiah addressed Olson in his bluff manner:

"Do you remember the challenge, sir? You have not forgotten that we are to settle an affair of honor when we reach latitude 90 deg."

"I am well aware of it, sir," said Olson, stiffly, "and I never shrink from my duty, sir."

"Very well, sir!"

Then both bowed with dignity and dropped the subject. They presently fell to discussing other matters.

Had they been aboard a sailing vessel now, they must have been greatly hindered by the great ice field which completely clogged Baffins Bay.

But the air-ship, of course, was not in the least affected by this, and sailed on at a good rate of speed.

But the cold was intense and required the speedy donning of thick furs. Also the sun ran lower on the horizon and betrayed the curious phenomenon familiar to Arctic dwellers.

Thus far nothing had been seen of human beings.

Animals of all kinds were seen, wolves, walrus and white bear. At times there was a feeling of temptation to indulge in a bear hunt.

But Frank was anxious to reach North Greenland.

There had been much talk of late years that the north part of Greenland extended all the way to the Pole and formed the real Arctic or Polar continent.

Frank discredited this theory.

He believed that there was a broad and open sea between the northern part of Greenland and the Pole.

To establish this fact was what he desired.

So the air ship's course was slightly changed to the eastward, which Frank reckoned would bring him to the shores of Greenland, at a point some hundred miles north of Upernavik.

Across the great ice fields the air ship now flew.

But suddenly, as it was passing over a level plain of ice, the attention of the voyagers was attracted by a curious scene.

There was plainly visible below, a collection of several hundred ice huts, the abodes of Esquimaux.

Dogs and sledges, and all the accompaniments of Esquimaux life, were included in the scene. Some of the natives themselves were lounging about or engaged in some occupation.

The appearance of the air ship over them, created an intense sensation. In less time than it takes to tell it, not an Esquimaux was in sight.

But the heads of some of them were seen at the openings of the ice huts cautiously taking a look at the, to them, strange apparition.

This caused a laugh on board the air-ship.

"Guns and sabers!" exclaimed Captain Obadiah, "they needn't be afraid of us—we won't harm them."

"Divil a bit!" cried Barney. "Shure we'd loike to make frinds wid 'em."

"We will try it if you all so desire," said Frank. "You have only to say the word."

"Good!" cried Obadiah, and the others joined in the chorus. So the air-ship settled down.

It rested upon an ice hummock in the center of the village. The voyagers leaped over the rail and stood once more on terra firma.

It was some while before they could induce the timid Esquimaux to come out of their ice huts.

But they finally overcame their fears, and as soon as they became assured that their visitors were human beings and not of a supernatural character, they were completely reassured.

In a short while the whole village, men, women and children, were swarming about the voyagers.

Curious looking mites of humanity they were, as broad as they were long in their fur suits.

They were fortunately a friendly tribe, and after getting acquainted entertained their visitors hospitably.

Captain Obadiah and Barney went sledge riding, and were offered a fat slice of blubber dipped in oil, but they were obliged to risk offending their new acquaintances and drew the line at this.

"Great muskets!" exclaimed the captain with a wry face. "I never smelled anything like that in my life. It was enough to drive one to suicide."

However the Esquimaux did not show offense and all went merry as a marriage feast for a time.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE OPEN SEA.

THEN it entered the heads of some of the pudgy natives to pay a visit aboard the air-ship.

Of course a refusal was out of the question. Frank undertook to show a delegation over the ship.

They passed from the cabin to the pilot-house, thence into the hold and finally out on deck again.

The mechanism of the ship was all Greek to them, but they had seen many wonderful things, and were delighted when Frank made each one a small gift.

But they had hardly left the air-ship when Pomp came rushing out holding his nose.

"Fo' de Lor' sakes, Marse Frank," he cried, "dere am somefing dead in dere, sho's yo' bo'n! Wha' fo' goodness sake am de mattah?"

At this moment Captain Obadiah also bolted out of the pilot-house. "Whew—ew—sh!" he gasped. "What's the matter in there, Mr. Reader?"

Frank stepped into the cabin for a moment. Then he stepped out.

He was satisfied. In an instant he divined the truth.

An Esquimaux met on the ice in a clear atmosphere will do very well at arm's length. But in a close room—well, we will say no more.

The odor which the Arctic natives had carried into the air-ship was of the vilest description. It transcended anything known in civilization, and was a mixture of grease, garlic, whale blubber, dead fish and dog. It could not be described in words.

"Whew!" said Frank, pinching his nose, "it will have to be fumigated before we can exist in there."

This was a nice little job for Barney and Pomp.

But, after burning chemicals for a long while, the bad odor was driven out. Of course, the Esquimaux never suspected anything of this sort else it is possible that they might have felt insulted.

However, some quite pretty furs were purchased of them.

These fortunately did not smell bad, so that nothing could be said against them. On the whole the brief stay in the Esquimaux village was enjoyed. The chief of the tribe urged them to come again.

But once more the air ship was under way and bound for North Greenland.

The next morning its shores were seen.

These were high cliffs and black. In places the rock formation was exposed to view.

But in general it looked like a great aggregation of icebergs piled up in an enormous heap. It was a wild and dreary spot.

Over the Arctic continent the air ship now continued to sail.

Frank turned his course due north, and put on increased speed.

The cold became intense.

He wanted to see how far toward the Pole the continent extended. It was his purpose to approach it from that direction.

The frozen waters of Baffins Bay were now left behind. In those waters many a good ship had been nipped, and now lay fathoms deep.

Many a brave crew of explorers had perished there.

All these reflections came to the voyagers and they were deeply impressed. Indeed had Frank been in any less of a hurry to reach the Pole, he would have spent some time in locating the historic spots and searching for the relics.

But time was too valuable just now and the Shooting Star kept on over Greenland.

Great mountains covered with snow and ice, deep valleys the same, and desolate plains became the order.

It was easy to see that they were on land and the explorers were all intensely interested.

"I have often heard it proposed to push through to the Pole with dogs and sledges over this part of the country," said Frank, "but I can tell you that such a thing is impracticable. It could never be done!"

"I agree with you, comrade," said Captain Obadiah; "it would be impossible for them to cross these crevasses or climb over this mountain wall."

"Just so," said Frank; "what is more, they would find the open sea to the north of them."

"Which would be a barrier."

"Sure!"

So this favorite theory of many explorers was exploded. The air-ship sped on swiftly.

Mountains and valleys and snow clad plains slid rapidly past. Then there seemed to come a noticeable change in the atmosphere.

"On my word, comrade," said Captain Obadiah, "I believe it is getting warmer."

"It will get warmer the nearer we draw to the Pole," said Frank.

The captain was surprised.

"Do you mean that?" he asked.

"I do."

"How do you explain it?"

"My way of thinking is that the Arctic or Polar continent is the scene of many active volcanoes. This heated action of the earth's forces has a material effect upon the atmosphere."

"By guns!" exclaimed the captain, admiringly, "what a head you have got. How did you know that?"

"I have reasoned it out," replied Frank with a smile.



"Well, it's pretty good reasoning. Anybody would think that you had been there."

"We are as near the Pole now as any human being ever got," said Frank.

"Eh? how is that?"

"The Lockward and Brainerd expedition reached a latitude of about 83 degrees, I believe. That was within seven degrees of the Pole, but it might as well have been seven hundred."

"Ah!"

"They, I believe, report coming to an open sea, which barred their further progress. This forced them to return."

As it became certain that the end of Greenland had been passed, all were now looking forward to a glimpse of the reputed open sea.

Countless explorers had vouched for it, but few living men had ever seen it. Some doubted its existence, but Frank firmly believed in it.

Great fields of ice now stretched away to the northward, but Frank called the captain's attention to one fact.

"Do you notice a difference in the ice?" he asked. "Do you not see that it is not quite so hard and solid as that of Baffins Bay?"

"I had not noticed, comrade," said Captain Obadiah inquiringly.

"Well, there is a great difference. This ice is of a different quality and not near so durable. That is in my estimation a very important fact."

"Indeed! How so?"

"It shows the influence of a warmer region near at hand. In fact there is no longer the same chill in the air which we have been experiencing."

"I have noted that," declared Obadiah with interest, "then you think we are approaching a warmer region?"

"I do, and that is the open Polar Sea. If there did not exist a warmer atmosphere north of us, that sea would not be open."

"I agree with you," declared Obadiah emphatically. "In fact—hello!"

The captain pointed excitedly to the horizon. At the same moment Barney from the pilot house cried:

"Misther Frank, wud yez come here, sor. Shure I think there's open wather ahead."

"The open sea?" exclaimed Frank, excitedly. Then all rushed for glasses. There was much excitement.

For a certain fact, open water lay before them. To say that Frank was delighted would be a mild statement.

The young inventor fairly danced with joy.

"That bears out my theory!" he cried. "The open sea is no myth! This is worth everything to science! Now for the Polar continent!"

Perhaps Captain Obadiah was fully as excited. He stumped up and down and kept saying:

"This will settle it! Obadiah Horn, your mission will be ended, and you can retire from a traveling life!"

The air-ship was sent forward with all speed.

The intervening miles were quickly cut down, and soon the line of coast was seen.

The snow and ice ceased within a mile of the water. The shores were sandy and low.

The air-ship sailed down, and by Frank's orders, alighted upon the gravelly beach.

The young inventor was desirous of taking a reckoning, and also of examining the electric engines before essaying the long trip across the Polar Sea.

While he was thus engaged the others of the party took an exploring trip along the shore.

Captain Obadiah and Olson went in one direction, and Barney and Pomp in the other.

The two latter men carried their shotguns to bag some wild geese, should they chance to come up in any.

But there was another purpose uppermost in Barney's mind. The Celt had it in for the ducky for a practical joke which he had played upon him some time before.

Frank had tabooed skylarking aboard the air ship, so that for some while the two jokers had been kept in abeyance.

But now that they were upon terra firma they had free license, and were disposed to make the most of it.

Barney was disposed to be the aggressor, and he waited for his opportunity.

He had provided for it beforehand.

Aboard the air-ship there were a number of decoy ducks which Barney had cleverly doctored. His method had been to cover the wooden blocks with a coat of glue and then carefully feather them.

Indeed at a little distance they had all the appearance of ducks. These decoys he had skillfully concealed in his pockets.

"Begorra, naygur," said the Celt, "divil a chance fer a shot have I seen yet."

"Huh! we ain't got into any likely place yet," said Pomp. "Jes' wait a lily bit."

"Oh, I'll wait," said Barney, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Ivery-thing cums to thim that wait. Shure but I'm goin' to carry home some foine ducks, or me name is not Barney O'Shea."

"Yo' needn't be too suah!" scoffed Pomp. "Doan' beliebe yo' cud hit one at fifty yards!"

"I'll bate fifty cints you kain't kill one at any distance," said Barney, in a bantering way. "Yez niver did know how to shoot nor niver will."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## BARNEY AND POMP GO ON A HUNTING TRIP.

This made Pomp very angry. If there was one thing he prided himself upon it was his marksmanship.

He was really a fine shot and Barney knew it. But the Celt was working out a scheme.

"I'll bet yez ye don't kill the furst duck we see," bantered the Celt.

"Mebbe I kain't," said the coon, "but I jes' go yo' I get two out ob three ob de fus ducks we see."

"I'll go yez!" cried Barney.

At this moment they were skirting an angle in a cliff. Barney let the ducky precede him and at an unobserved moment he placed one of the decoys upon a projecting spur.

It could be plainly seen for a hundred yards in either direction, and looked for all the world like a genuine duck sitting there.

When they had reached a point about one hundred yards from the spot, Barney suddenly clutched the ducky's shoulder.

"Begorra!" he whispered, "we're lavin' all the game behoid us,"

"Wha' yo' mean by dat?"

"Whist! there's a foine duck sittin' on thot ledge back there. Shure, it'll be aisy to dhop him."

"Golly!" muttered Pomp, with his eyes on the decoy, "dat am a berry easy shot. Jes' like picking money up to hit him."

"I'll bet yez don't."

"I go yo', honey!"

"All roight."

Up went Pomp's shotgun. He took an extremely careful aim. Then he pulled the trigger.

The air was full of shot. The duck's feathers flew a little, but it did not drop. Nor did it fly away.

Again Pomp fired.

But it did not budge.

The ducky looked astonished. His eyes grew rounder and rounder.

"Golly!" he muttered. "I sartin suah hit dat duck!"

"Be jabers, yez didn't kill it yet!" declared Barney, "it's a foine hunter yez are!"

"Don't yo' talk now," said the coon, slipping new cartridges into his gun. "Yo' see some fun dis time."

Again he aimed and fired.

Again feathers flew, but the duck still sat there as unconcerned as a heatheer about his soul.

Pomp dropped the butt of his gun to the ground, and muttered:

"Fo' de lan's sake wha' am dat duck made of?"

Barney had stifled his laughter all the while. It was nuts for him. But now he saw the danger of discovery.

The ducky started for the spot where the decoy was placed. Instantly the Celt began to shiver and chatter his teeth.

"Bad cess to the crather," he cried, "shure it's a banshee duck an' if yez go near it, it will turn ye into a hobgoblin!"

Pomp came to a dead stop.

"Hey, dar!" he exclaimed; "wha' am dat yo' say!"

Whoever saw a ducky that was not the essence of superstition or voodooism? Pomp was no exception.

As the thought flashed across him, his kinky wool literally rose on end.

His eyes were like round moons, and he stood right still where he was. He saw now quite plainly why he had failed to bring down the duck.

"Fo' de Lor' Harry!" he exclaimed. "I neber done fo't ob dat befo'! Sartin dar am sumfin' berry peculinizyer about dat ar duck. I kin take mah berry solemn oath dat I plump hit him."

"Begorra, thim if his loife wuz not charmed he'd 'ave fell," declared Barney. "Don't yez go near him, naygur—shure he'll hoodoo yez!"

"Mah goodness!" said the ducky; "doan' want nuffin' to do wif sich drefful critters! I'm jes' gwine to git raight out ob dis lokality. Am yo' wid me, honey?"

"Bejabers, I'm that!" declared Barney. "I've no love for banshees mesilf—I'm wid yez."

Pomp did not regain his composure until a safe distance had been made. All the while Barney behind him was exploding with laughter.

Some distance further on the Celt decided to work the same racket. If he succeeded two more times he would have won his wager.

But, alas and alack, as the song has it, the Celt tripped up in his little game.

And he was exposed in the very act. Just as he was about to place the second decoy, Pomp turned and caught him.

For a moment there was a tableau. The two jokers stood gazing at each other.

Pomp saw the decoy duck in Barney's hand. In a moment a suspicion dawned upon him.

"Wha' am dat yo' got dar, honey?" he asked. "Dat am no real duck."

"Divil a bit," said Barney, non-plused for a way out of the dilemma. And this the ducky did not intend that he should have.

"Am dat de same kind ob a duck I was shootin' at, sah?" he asked, sharply. "Did yo' put up a job on me?"

The ducky dropped his gun and pulled off his fur coat. He spat upon his hands savagely.

"On mah wo'd, honey, I'm gwine to take dat out ob yo' hide," he cried. "Yo' mark mah wo'd."



"Yez ain't able," retorted Barney, shaking his red head defiantly. "Yez ain't got ther beef to do it."

"Clar de track, chille!" cried Pomp, lowering his head. "I'se a comin'!"

Then he swooped down upon Barney. The wrestle that followed was a lively one.

It was hard to say which had the best of it, or how long it would have lasted, had it not been for an interruption.

This was in the form of a distant report of a gun.

In an instant the two skylarkers were sober.

"Dat am Marse Frank's signal," cried Pomp.

"Begorra, that's thrue!" agreed Barney.

"Wha' can be de mattah?"

"P'raps some av the Esquimaux have attacked the air ship, be jabsers!"

"I reckon we bettah get along back!"

"In course!"

So they picked up their rifles and started back to the air ship. But when they came in sight of it nothing was seen of a foe.

Then they knew that Frank had finished his job, and was ready to start upon the trip across the Polar Sea.

Barney and Pomp soon reached the air-ship. They learned that this was the truth.

Captain Obadiah and Olson were already there.

As soon as possible, therefore, the air-ship was once more afloat, and the start was made.

Rapidly the coast line faded away and soon nothing was about them but a seemingly boundless sea.

Its waters were blue and clear as crystal. At first it seemed as if they must be fresh.

But this was not so.

The air-ship kept on her course across the Polar Sea for many hours. Frank was constantly at the wheel and eagerly scanning the horizon.

He was looking for the Polar Continent, which was supposed to lie upon the 90 degree parallel, or exactly at the earth's axis.

If it was proved that such a land did really exist, it would be a grand triumph for science. If not, then the theories of many learned men must be set at naught.

But the voyage to 90 deg. latitude could not last always.

Every hour now cut the distance down. The suspense of the voyages became intense.

But at the very most critical moment when everybody was on the qui vive, Frank cried:

"Ahoy! there she is. Land at last."

"Land!"

The exclamation went from lip to lip. It was an intense moment. They felt much as Columbus must have felt when he first sighted land in the western hemisphere. It was an indescribable sensation.

To think that they were to see this wonderful Polar continent before any other living white man was a most exciting thought.

At first it was but a faint line on the horizon.

But it gradually grew plainer until the black basaltic cliffs of a volcanic continent burst into view.

Beyond them were mighty mountain ranges and hills. Some of these were unmistakably active volcanoes.

"That explains it all," said Frank; "the volcanoes are what make the mild climate at this extreme point of the Arctic world."

It was indeed an anomalous thing that such a region of warmth should exist so completely surrounded by a mighty region of ice and snow.

Nearer the air ship drew to the Polar shore.

"At last we have reached 90 deg. north latitude," declared Frank.

"We can go no further north."

"We are then at the end of the world," declared Obadiah.

"Exactly!"

All hung breathlessly over the rail as the air ship crossed the breaker line and the shore of the Arctic continent was really beneath them.

Then Frank made a motion to Barney, who was at the wheel.

"Slow up!" he commanded. "We will land upon that cliff yonder."

"Are we going to land so soon?" cried Captain Obadiah, with delight.

"Just so," declared Frank. "I want to take a look along this coast before we venture into the interior."

"Be sure that is very agreeable to me," and Captain Obadiah walked up and down the deck in an ostentatious way.

Frank did not see any significance in his words or actions, but there was one on board who did.

This was Olson.

The old salt drew the strap on his wooden leg a bit tighter and took a fresh quid of tobacco. He was quite cool and unconcerned.

Down settled the air-ship.

A moment later it rested upon the brow of the cliff. The view from this elevation was good, and the descent to the shore was easy.

Anchors were thrown out, and then Barney remarked:

"Shure, Misther Frank, I don't see anything of human beings livin' about here at all, at all."

"It is likely that we will find traces of them later," said Frank.

"Probably they live in the interior."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE AFFAIR OF HONOR—THE POLAR VALLEY.

THEN Frank leaped over the rail and Barney followed him.

It seemed good indeed to stand once more on terra firma. Frank advanced to the verge of the cliff.

He saw that the sands were of a reddish tinge and the cliffs were all of volcanic formation. A peculiar sort of lichen diversified strange patterns over their smooth surface.

"A curious land," he muttered. "Yet its formation is easily understood. At this point volcanic fires rage beneath the earth's crust. These have made upheavels and thousands of years have added to the quota to make the continent."

He saw that the soil was passable for purposes of agriculture.

No doubt crops could be raised in its interior and there might even be forests and jungles, perhaps peopled with beasts of prey.

One thing he felt sure of. The region was auriferous.

The character of the soil and its strata showed this. Minerals no doubt abounded, and possibly gold predominated.

He remembered that generally all Arctic lands contained deposits of gold, and these appeared to increase in value and quantity as one neared the Pole.

"We can indulge in the diversion of placer mining if we choose," he thought, "that will be entertainment surely."

And while thus engaged in rumination, a sudden uproar from the air ship's deck attracted his attention.

He at once turned thither.

Olson was stamping up and down the deck excitedly. His wooden leg swung like the pendulum of a clock.

Captain Obadiah stood by the gangway a towering giant.

"Now, sir," he cried grandiloquently, "we will adjust that question of honor! Swords, sir, or pistols, sir, at any number of paces, sir. I don't care what. If you are not a coward, come on!"

"Ho, ho, you landlubber!" roared Olson, "port your jawing tackle and give me a chance to dip an oar. Ole Olson never refused yet to defend an affair of honor!"

"Very well, sir, then why don't you toe the mark?" shouted Obadiah. "I'll quickly show you that a soldier's training is more than a match for the paltry cutlass play or single-stick of a marine milk-sop. Come along, sir, or eat your words!"

"Hold! You forget, blatherskite!" roared Olson, "I have not refused to meet you, but—the cutlasses, sir! We were to fight with cutlasses!"

"Well, and let it be broomsticks then—but come along. Where are your cutlasses?"

"At the bottom of the ocean, in the last Advance," replied Olson.

"If we can find such weapons aboard this ship, I will not delay you."

"Hang you for a bounty jumper!" roared Obadiah. "There's no cutlass aboard this craft!"

"Yo' may be suah ob dat, sah," declared Pomp. "Dere am some swords down in de armory, but I done fink yo' people bettah fight wif stuffed mittens."

"Begorra, that's roight," roared Barney, who had just come aboard.

But Olson had dived down into the cabin after the swords. In a moment he reappeared.

"Now, my fine friend," he said obsequiously, handing one to Captain Obadiah, "I am ready for you."

"Shame on yez!" cried Barney facetiously, "to foight a man wid a wooden leg!"

But the two old timers heeded no scoffs or jeers. They climbed soberly down from the gangway and stood upon the ledge of the cliff.

"Now, sir!" cried Captain Obadiah, with a magnificent flourish of his weapon, "there is one chance for your life. You shall retract your statement and live."

"Never!" cried Olson grimly, putting himself on guard. "Honor must be satisfied!"

"Enough!" roared the old soldier. "Here's for your heart!"

The blades clashed.

Barney and Pomp looked at each other.

Up to this moment they had looked upon it as horse play. Now it looked a bit serious.

"Bejabers, they act as if they were in earnest," declared Barney.

"Yo' am right, chile. Wha' had we better do?"

"Shure here is Misther Frank."

Backward and forward, leaned and lunged the two swordsmen. Up and down, right and left, play and counter-play, swept the gleaming blades.

The number of passes, parries and thrusts and the miraculous escapes were amazing.

There was little difference in the ability of the swordsmen.

Olson's coat was ripped and slashed and the buttons cut off. Captain Obadiah's waistcoat was in ribbons. Yet neither were scratched.

At first sight Frank had thought it a bit of sport.

But a closer view showed him the earnestness of the duelists.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated, "they will kill each other. It must be stopped!"

An iron rod lay upon the rocks where it had rolled from the air-ship's deck.

Frank picked it up and rushing forward threw up the flashing blades.

"Hold," he cried. "What the deuce are you doing? Give it up I tell you!"



The two duelists paused and fiercely turned upon him.  
 "Stand aside, you, sir!" roared Obadiah; "this is our affair."  
 "And mine, too!" cried Frank, undauntedly. "What does this mean? Why are you fighting like this?"

Olson swung his wooden leg about, and replied:  
 "An affair of honor, sir. I am the challenged party."  
 "He challenged you?" exclaimed Frank. "Is this a duel?"  
 "Exactly, sir!" cried Obadiah. "It was arranged before we left home. He insulted me and we challenged each other to fight to the death when we should meet in Latitude 90 degrees."

"That is it, sir," affirmed Olson. "The honor of a sailor must be maintained."  
 "And the spirit of a soldier can never be squelched," declared Obadiah.

Frank saw the truth at once. He knew that these men were types of the old time army and navy men, who deemed it a sacred duty to stand upon a point of questionable honor, even at the sacrifice of life.

He also saw in that moment how difficult it was going to be to controvert these whims so deeply engrafted in their compositions.

Force could not accomplish it. Only diplomacy would avail.

"Well," exclaimed the young inventor, cudgeling his brain for a plan, "let us see. Can we not arrange a compromise?"

"An apology," declared Obadiah.

"Never!" gritted Olson.

"Wait—wait," cried Frank, "let me see. What were the terms? Where were you to fight?"

"In latitude 90 deg.," declared Olson. "And here we are. No settlement can be made. Stand guard."

"Hold," cried Frank, beating back the swords again. Then a swift inspiration came to him.

"You are breaking your compact," he cried. "You are forfeiting your honor. This is not a duel but a cheap brawl."

"What?" cried Obadiah, lowering his sword; "explain your words, comrade. How do we forfeit our honor?"

"You agreed to fight when you reached latitude 90 deg."

"Yes."

"Well, shame upon you! We are yet many degrees from that latitude. 'This is not latitude 90 deg.'"

The sword points fell. The force of the argument was seer. It was sufficient.

The duelists looked crestfallen.

"Have we made a mistake, messmate?" exclaimed Olson. "Put up your sword. We will settle the affair in 90 deg. or not at all."

"Right!" agreed Obadiah. "That was the term of the compact. But no harm has been done."

"None at all. I will wait upon you at 90 deg."

"Very well, sir."

Back aboard the air ship the duelists went. In a few moments they were upon as friendly terms as ever.

Frank went into the pilot house and laughed until his sides were like to split.

Barney and Pomp were with him.

"Well, I never!" he cried. "I should think those two old cranks were taken right out of an old buccaneer novel and dropped right down among us. If they are not genuine characters, then I'll treat."

"Yo' am right, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp. "Whew! but didn't dey make de sparks fly."

"Oh, yes," said Frank. "We have no swordsmen in these days equal to them. But what shall we do? When we reach the Pole they will certainly have it out."

"Be jabbers, let 'em go it, sor, cried Barney, "it's only their own throats they do be afther cuttin'."

"That is true!" agreed Frank. "but it would not be right to let it go on. We will put a stop to it in some way."

And so the matter dropped.

Other events came along so rapidly now that it was soon forgotten. Frank went into the pilot house and sent the air-ship up.

Over the basaltic cliffs it sailed and through a sort of narrow pass. Great mountain walls rose above the air-ship's deck. It was like a scene in Hades.

Eagles of mighty spread of wing floated over the deep abyss. Far below were dark defiles and caverns.

"By muskets!" cried Obadiah, "this is a lonesome kind of a country. I never saw anything like it."

"It beats the mountains of the Moon," declared Olson. "I tell ye, mate, I was lost there four months once with a party of slavers. We were sent into the interior for blacks and got mixed up in the confounded country."

Then Olson began to detail a hair-raising account of his adventures to which Captain Obadiah responded with periodical grunts.

But at this moment the air-ship turned an angle in the mountain range and a wonderful scene broke upon the view of all.

It was a deep and long valley, green and fertile and extending to the north as far as the eye could reach.

And in the center of this valley the walls, house tops and domes of a strange looking city were seen. All doubts were settled. The Polar Continent was inhabited by human beings.

## CHAPTER X.

## A HOSTILE TRIBE—THE REPULSE.

THE Polar city was unlike any collection of abodes which our voyagers had ever seen before.

The streets were narrow, and the housetops were connected with various bridges. Indeed, it seemed as if the living rooms of the inhabitants were entirely at the top of the buildings.

This much the voyagers saw as the air-ship swung into the green and fertile valley, which seemed an emerald gem in the heart of the mountains of gloomy black.

As yet nothing was to be seen of the inhabitants, but as the air-ship drew nearer all gave an exclamation of amazement.

A number of the strangest beings their eyes had ever rested upon were visible upon a rocky ledge just below.

One of the men, a perfect giant in stature, carried the carcass of a bear over his shoulders with the greatest of ease.

Full seven feet they averaged in height, and their muscles were massive. Their hair and beards were of a flaxen yellow.

They were rudely dressed in garments of skins and their weapons were spears and slings. All this bore out the scientific theory that the Arctic natives were descendants of Norwegian voyagers whose ships had one time penetrated these dangerous parts of the world.

The hardy Norsemen had doubtless founded a colony here in this lonely part of the world, which had endured for many centuries.

Here the remnant of a once barbaric race yet lived, doubtless clinging to the traditions and customs of their forefathers.

That they were fully as warlike and barbarous was evident from their general appearance.

The sight of the air-ship had a curious effect upon them.

At first they stood staring up at it in apparent stupefaction. Certainly nothing of the kind had ever appeared to them before.

"We evidently surprise them not a little," said Frank; "it is not to be wondered at."

"By muskets!" ejaculated Captain Obadiah, "they surprise me not a little, too. I've set foot on every inhabited part of the globe, but I never saw their likes before!"

"Steady, mates," cried Olson, "they are hailing us!"

This seemed true. The Norse people were making violent gesticulations and seemed much excited.

"They are not signaling us," declared Frank. "Ah, now, you can see what they are up to."

And indeed an astonishing thing happened. From a cleft in the mountain wall, full a hundred armed and fierce looking warriors sprang. It was to them that the others had been signaling.

At their head was a white bearded old man with a long gown of white bearskin. He had a patriarchal and imposing appearance.

He carried a crooked staff in his hand and at intervals waved it furiously at the air-ship. Frank allowed the Shooting Star to hang over the spot.

"What are they trying to do anyway?" asked Obadiah, in a puzzled way; "they act like a lot of monkeys."

"Their actions are not friendly, mates," declared Olson.

"I have it!" cried Frank, who had been studying the situation closely. "I can tell you what their game is. They regard us as some invention of the Evil One and this old priest is trying his exhortations to frighten us away."

Captain Obadiah and Olson laughed heartily at this.

"Probably we will go," cried the captain, "that is if he keeps that fantastic work up long enough."

"Are ye going to try and make friends with them, skipper?" asked Olson.

"By no means," declared Frank; "it would be quite useless. They would never treat with us."

"So I believe," cried Obadiah. "Heigho! here comes another delegation of the white priests!"

This was true.

From the city gates full twenty of the white clad sagas or priests came in a column, all wildly singing and gesticulating.

That they were trying to drive the air-ship away by working a spell was very certain.

Frank smiled grimly.

"That is likely to have lots of effect on us," he declared. "No, we certainly can never treat with those barbarians."

The whole Polar city was now aroused. The walls were thronged with armed men.

Women and children were in the bristling throng, and seemed ready to take an active part in the defense.

"It is all typical of the Norse people," declared Frank, "they are trained to battle from the cradle."

The war-like demonstrations continued for some time. Then wearying of the scene, Frank stepped to the key board to send the air-ship ahead.

He placed his hand upon the propeller key and pressed it. The propeller did not respond.

At the same moment a curious warning click came from the mechanism below. For a moment Frank was dumfounded.

Again he pressed the key, but in vain. Then he pressed the key which controlled the rotascopes.

There was a rending, crashing sound with a terrific buzzing, and electric sparks came flying from the engine room door.

"Mercy on us!" gasped Frank; "the machinery has given out."

A great cry came from the deck.

"Look out, Frank! Don't go down much further."



"Are we sinking?" cried the young inventor.

"Yes!"

"My soul!" gasped Frank; "then we are lost!"

Down the air-ship was fast settling. She would soon rest upon the earth at this rate.

Down into the dynamo room Frank sprang. He went hastily over the engines, but could not at once locate the trouble.

At that moment thrilling cries came from the deck.

"Begorra, Misther Frank, they're afther attackin' us," cried Barney, wildly. "Wud yez come quick!"

As Frank leaped up into the pilot house through the window he saw a thrilling scene.

The Polar people were really coming to the attack. It was evident that they regarded the aerial voyagers as unwelcome intruders. They were exhorted to the fray by the priests.

It was a thrilling moment.

Any one with less nerve than Frank Reade, Jr., might have faltered at that moment.

But he did not.

He saw the consequences of the barbarian hordes coming aboard the air ship. It would mean death and destruction.

There was but one course to pursue.

They must be repulsed.

Frank was much averse to the shedding of blood. He knew that these ignorant people were not cognizant of what they were doing.

To shoot them down like sheep seemed intensely wicked.

Yet self preservation demanded extreme measures. Already the voyagers were armed with Winchesters, ready to repel the attack.

The Polar warriors were fully a thousand in number. They came on with deadly determination.

The stones and slugs from their slings were rattling upon the shell of the air ship like hail. One of them was nearly as deadly as a bullet.

To say that Frank was in a quandary would be putting it mild. "Begorra, Misther Frank," cried Barney, "will we not be afther giving thim a volley, sor?"

"No—no!" cried Frank; "we must not take life unnecessarily."

"On me wurrud, sor, they'll mighty quick take ours!"

"Let's see if we can turn them," said the young inventor, grimly.

He rushed forward to the electric gun in the bow. It was but a moment's work to train it upon a hillock just in the path of the advancing horde.

Then he pressed the electric button.

The cylinders closed, the pneumatic chamber was filled, and with a little recoil the gun went off. The dynamite shell struck the hillock.

The report was deafening. Great columns of dirt and stones rose in the air. It seemed like a literal volcanic up-burst.

Directly in the face of the advancing barbarians, they were brought to a standstill.

Frank did not lose his opportunity.

Again and again he fired the pneumatic gun. The shells struck all around the terrified Norsemen, bursting with awful uproar.

It was enough.

The superstitious barbarians, who had never seen an explosive, could not but believe that this was a visitation of Thor himself.

They fled precipitately.

Not until they had reached the city gates, did Frank desist in his dynamite thunderings. Not once did the foe rally.

This ended it.

It was a bloodless victory.

The enemy had been routed fairly and squarely, and not a life had been lost. This was a matter of congratulation.

"By muskets!" cried Captain Obadiah, emphatically, "that's the slickest victory I ever heard of. A thousand licked and not one man killed!"

"That is what ye might call scientific fighting, mate," declared Olson.

"I should say so."

"Now," said Frank, "let me know if they return to the attack. I've got to see about this machinery."

Down into the engine-room he went again.

It required but a few moments this time for him to locate the trouble. It was really very slight and easily remedied.

A heap of induction wire had fallen from a shelf and struck between two cogs. The wire winding up in them stopped their action.

It was the work of but a few moments to cut the wire away, and then the cogs, being readjusted, worked as well as ever. The air-ship was all right once more.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LATITUDE NINETY DEGREES—THE AFFAIR OF HONOR SETTLED.

FRANK had no intention of lingering in the Polar valley.

He knew that he could never hope to make friends with this tribe of the Polar natives. Therefore there was little need of remaining longer in the vicinity.

So he at once started the rotascopes and the Shooting Star once more sprung into the air.

Up into the clouds the voyagers went. Then Frank descended again until about a thousand feet above the earth.

Then up the Polar valley the air-ship sailed once more.

The Norse city was left far behind and soon was out of sight altogether. But new scenes now claimed the attention of all.

Passing over a section of the mountain range, a wonderful elevated lake burst into view.

It was high above the common level, and surrounded by jutting walls of black basalt. It was fully ten miles in length and breadth.

This was a picturesque spot in the heart of the grim mountains. Looking down through the transparent waters, huge fish were seen upon the gravelly bed.

Across this mountain lake voyagers sailed.

Then once more the mountains divided, and this time a strange valley was seen filled with clouds of smoke.

No living thing—no vestige of green could be seen anywhere. It was an earthly type of Hades.

"Great Jericho!" exclaimed Olson. "We don't want to go in there!"

"It's a volcanic valley," declared Frank. "Part of that cloud is steam. There are geysers. Oh, see that!"

Even as he spoke an enormous geyser near by sent up a column of water full sixty feet into the air. The report was like that of a cannon.

"Whew!" gasped Captain Obadiah, "that came from a hot place!"

"We may all have to go there some time," said Olson grimly.

"You will, sir, when we reach latitude 90 degrees," said the captain tartly.

"There is as good a chance for you, sir," retorted Olson.

Frank penetrated as far into the volcanic valley as he dared with the air-ship. Then he arose above it, only to bring another astounding scene to view.

This was the crater of an active volcano. It covered fully a square mile in area.

It was a livid lake of boiling lava, which bubbled and frothed like a mighty caldron.

The gases which rose from it were overpowering so that the air-ship did not venture too near.

Over this volcanic region they were passing when Captain Obadiah put a hand on Frank's arm.

"Will you grant me a favor, Mr. Reade," he asked.

"Well?" replied Frank.

"Will you tell me, just what latitude we have reached?"

"After a moment," said Frank. "I must first make a bit of reckoning."

And this he proceeded to do. It was to satisfy a suspicion in his own mind as well as to answer the captain.

After some time spent in making the reckoning, he made a startling announcement.

"We are exactly at the Pole," he declared.

"What?" gasped the captain. "Is this the Pole actually?"

"It is!"

"Swords and muskets! Where then is latitude 90 degrees?"

Frank pointed to the boiling crater.

"The center of that crater," he said, "actually is latitude 90 degrees north."

The captain looked at the boiling mass aghast. Then he turned and saluted Olson.

"Sir," he said, with icy dignity, "the time has come. This is the place where we agreed to settle our affair of honor!"

"I am ready, sir," said Olson stiffly, "be so good as to bring out the swords."

"No, no!" cried Frank, hastily, "that matter was all settled on the coast. Don't you remember that you both agreed—"

"To wait until we reached the exact point of 90 deg.," said the captain, tartly.

"Yes, but—"

"There is no use of idle discussion. The matter must be settled. We are men of honor and never break our word."

"By no means," agreed Olson. "We can offer no compromise. Honor demands a settlement."

"And you shall have it, sir," declared the captain. "I will fetch the weapons."

He disappeared into the cabin. Frank felt like having a fight himself. What should he do to controvert the stubbornness of these two men?

"I say," he cried. "You are a pair of fools! Now challenge me both of you! I'll fight you both!"

"Our affair must be settled first," declared Olson.

"By all means," said Obadiah, extending his opponent a sword.

"Now if you will kindly descend, Mr. Reade, we will thank you."

"I decline!" said Frank, stiffly.

"What?"

"You two old cranks must not and shall not fight. In fact it is impossible for you to do so. Neither of you can keep your compact."

"What, sir?" cried Olson.

"Explain your words," demanded the captain, hotly.

"You may be sure I will," said Frank, coolly. "In the first place this foolish challenge of yours, set the place of meeting at a certain and particular spot known as latitude 90 deg., did it not?"

Both nodded in reply.

"Very good! there was no stipulation that the affair should be settled anywhere else?"

"No!" both replied.

"That settles it then. You cannot fight. Latitude 90 deg. or the exact Pole is right in the center of that crater. Perhaps you can ex-



ist there long enough to fight your foolish duel. But I don't believe that you can."

The captain and Olson looked at the lake of lava. Then both threw down the swords.

"The skipper is right, sir," declared Olson, "the affair is settled."

"Well, comrade, it is no fault of mine that the chosen spot was in the middle of a crater," apologized the captain.

"Consider the question honorably settled by Fate," said Frank.

"Is not that fair?"

"It is," cried Obadiah, heartily. "Comrade," holding out his hand to Olson, "my honor is appeased."

"And I will say the same, shipmate!" declared the old salt, heartily.

Then the two old fighting cocks shook hands warmly, and the famous affair of honor was settled.

Frank took due credit to himself for his skillful intercession.

The air-ship rose above the crater and went on beyond the Pole. Far enough in that direction would take them to the delta of the Lena and Siberia.

Captain Obadiah and Olson were soon engaged in playing chess, and were warmer friends than ever.

Each respected the other's valor and nerve, and this is ever the truest basis of friendship.

Frank's purpose now was to sail to the other shore of the Polar Continent and then to sail around it to make sure that it was surrounded by water on all sides.

The European and Asiatic side of the continent was somewhat different in topography.

There were numerous rivers and stretches of level green plain. Upon this latter fed many strange species of elk and moose.

It was a strong temptation to descend and have a jolly hunt, but Frank refrained and kept the air-ship on its course.

The weather was delightful and mild. Indeed, all were favorably impressed with this section of the Polar Continent.

But soon the scene began to change again.

The plains gave way rapidly to a series of foot-hills and deep gulches. There were brawling streams and deep pools.

"There," said Frank with sudden conviction; "if anywhere in this region gold is to be found it is right here."

"Do ye believe it, mate?" cried Olson eagerly.

"I do."

"Why not do a bit of prospecting? When I was in the Mountains of the Moon one day came upon a rich find—"

"Easy, comrade," put in Captain Obadiah at this moment. "We care for no Munchausen stories just now."

"Do you mean an insult, sir?" flashed Olson.

"No, not!" put in Frank suddenly. "We've had one affair of honor. Let us not have another."

"But I am insulted," began Olson.

However, before he could say more, or the affair could come to a head, a thrilling thing occurred.

Suddenly from forward a loud cry of alarm and terror went up.

Barney had been trying to arrange a section of the anchor cable in the bow of the ship. Being near the rail, his foot slipped, the coil of rope fell against him, and the next moment he was overboard.

It was Pomp who let out the mighty yell of alarm.

"Fo' de lan' sake, Marse Frank!" he screamed, "dat fishman hab fallen to his death!"

"Heavens!" gasped Frank, "that is the end of Barney!"

The distance to the earth was full five hundred feet. The air-ship was moving slowly.

Below was a swirling river with deep pools. It was a frightful fall.

All rushed to the rail expecting to see Barney's lifeless form upon the earth below.

But in this they were disappointed. The Celt was not in sight.

The long coil of anchor rope had payed out and was hanging scarcely fifty feet from the earth. But nothing was seen of the Celt.

"By muskets!" cried Captain Obadiah. "What do ye reckon has become of him?"

"Can you not see him anywhere?" breathed Frank hoarsely. "Oh, if he could only have clung to the rope!"

"Perhaps he did, mate," said Olson.

Pomp gave a joyful yell.

"On mah wo'd, Marse Frank, he am in dat ribber," he cried.

"In the river?"

"Yes, sah, fo' suah; I jes' see him crawl up de bank."

"Thank Heaven!" cried the young inventor, joyfully; "then he is alive?"

"I done believe so, Marse Frank."

"Down with the air ship," cried Frank; "he must be in need of help after such a frightful fall."

But Pomp was already at the keyboard. The air ship descended quickly, and rested upon the ground not many yards from the river.

Then, as Frank leaped over the rail, a bedraggled form clambered up the bank, and a rich brogue was heard.

"Begorra, that's the cowidest wather I iver tuk a swim it, bad cess to it!"

"Barney!" cried Frank, joyfully; "how did you escape death?"

The Celt's eyes twinkled.

"Shure, that's nothin'," he said. "Yez can't break an Irishman's neck at that distance."

## CHAPTER XII.

A TREASURE FIND—SOUTHWARD BOUND—THE END.

"On my word," cried Frank, "I believe you, Barney. Did you fall into the water?"

"Shure, an' can't yez see by me looks, sor? I'd niver gone in swimmin' wid me clothes on."

Everybody laughed, and the nervous tension of a short while previous was greatly relieved.

Barney explained his providential escape in his peculiar fashion.

It seemed that in going over the rail he had a good grip on the anchor rope.

It paid out rapidly beneath his weight, and when less than fifty feet from the water the sudden shock of reaching the end of the rope caused the Celt to lose his grip, and he dropped into the river.

It was a cold plunge, but he was an excellent swimmer, and quickly found his way out as we have seen.

It was a matter of much joyful congratulation that he had escaped with his life.

"Be me sowl," cried Barney, as he wrung the water from his garments, "it's the loiveliest place fer fish I iver seen. It's aloive wid him."

"Fish!" exclaimed Olson? "I'm fond of the sport, mates. Suppose we have a try at it?"

The suggestion met with general favor. Fishing tackle was produced and the sport began.

There were trout and grayling of prodigious size and ravenous appetite. The sport was first class.

Frank and Captain Obadiah went down the stream some ways, following the current and rapidly filled their creels.

They finally reached a point where the stream broadened and ran over shallow pebbly bars.

Here it became necessary to wade. As Frank stepped into the transparent current he noticed something with a yellow hue imbedded in the sands.

Impelled with a queer presentiment he reached down and picked it up. Its weight was considerable.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the young inventor. "Come here, Horn. I have made a discovery."

"Eh, comrade?" exclaimed the old veteran. "What is it?"

"Look for yourself."

Frank held the object up.

Obadiah gave a gasping cry.

"Gold!" he said, huskily; "a fine nugget of gold!"

"Just so!" declared Frank. "And there is more here also."

At this moment Olson and Pomp came up. All at once became imbued with the gold fever.

In a few moments they were excitedly wading the stream and searching for nuggets. Their efforts were well rewarded.

In a very short time a snug fortune had been recovered from the sand bar. That the sands of the river would wash out great returns there was no doubt.

The result was that several days were spent on "Polar Bar" as the name was given to the bed of sand.

In that space considerable gold was recovered. This was taken aboard the air ship.

But after a while all tired even of gold hunting.

It was then that Captain Obadiah one day appeared on deck and electrified everybody with a proposition which all had begun to think seriously of.

"I say, comrades, we've run our race and had a good time. Why is it not in order to make a change?"

"What shall it be, captain?" asked Frank.

"Let us go home!"

"Home!"

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!" sang Olson.

"I'm quite ready, mates."

"Begorra, it's not sich a bad place ather all," averred Barney.

"I'm in for it if the rest of yez are."

"Golly! I've seen all I want to ob dis yer kentry," declared Pomp. Frank was reflective.

He consulted a calender and said:

"Well, if that is the desire of all, it shall be so. We will be able to make Newfoundland before winter sets in."

So the matter was decided.

They had visited the North Pole, had carried out their scheme successfully, and were satisfied.

They were carrying back a fortune. Captain Obadiah and Olson had settled their affair of honor, and they were content.

So no time was lost in completing the preparations. Soon the air-ship was ready to start.

Frank abandoned his plan of making a circuit of the Polar Continent. Now that the infection had seized upon all they could not return fast enough.

"Well," declared Captain Obadiah, "this puts to an end my life of travel. I can now boast of having set foot upon every inhabited land on the globe."

"You might modify that a little," said Frank.

"How so?" asked the captain with asperity.

"There are doubtless inhabited parts of the earth as yet undiscovered."

"Eh? The deuce! that can't be! Where are they, sir?"

"Well, there is a large part of the earth's surface as yet unexplored," replied Frank. "For instance, the Antarctic regions."



"Don't tell him that, Mr. Reade," pleaded Olson; "he will be just foolish enough to set out for there at once."

"If I knew!" cried Obadiah; "but, pshaw, sir, that is not yet an established fact."

"No, that is true," declared Frank; "but I purpose to make a trip there some day."

"Good! If you should find it inhabited, sir, you must let me know. But perhaps before that time I may be setting foot upon a land from which none of us ever return."

"I trust not, sir," said Frank earnestly.

The air-ship speedily got under way and once more sped over the volcanic range and the Norse valley. When the open sea beyond came into view all began to feel that a good start homeward was made.

Across the open sea the Shooting Star made its way, and in due time the northern coast of Greenland hung in sight.

Once more they were above the ice fields, where the walrus and the white bear had their haunts.

For days the air ship hung over these. Then finally Frank announced that they were upon the shores of Baffin's Bay, and he proposed to run across to Labrador, and thence again into Rupert Land. But at this juncture the great catastrophe came. So suddenly did it precipitate itself, that none in the party were prepared.

The Star hung perhaps a thousand feet over the ice fields. Barney was at the wheel, and the rest of the party were in the cabin.

The weather was bitter cold, for the Arctic winter was settling in.

The main strait which extended through the bay, was rapidly congealing, and would soon be closed to navigation. The sun appeared above the horizon only at intervals, and a gloom was upon everything.

This had more or less of a depressing effect upon the spirits of the party and all were sure that they should feel better when twenty degrees further south.

Suddenly, however, Barney noticed that the rotascopes began to lose their power. The ship began to sink.

The Celt put on all speed, but this made no difference. Something was wrong.

The ship fell five hundred feet, then wavered and began to fall again. Frank rushed into the pilot-house.

"What is the matter, Barney?" he cried. "What has happened?"

"Shure, sor, I'm not able to tell yez," cried the Celt, "the machinery won't work!"

A ghastly pallor swept over Frank's face.

"I understand it," he said; "the worst has come to pass. The electric engines have worn out. We can never return home with the air-ship."

The other voyagers heard this with consternation. A genuine panic was at once created.

It was a fearful thing to contemplate. In a few moments the disabled air-ship rested upon the ice fields.

Frank did all he could to repair or bolster up the engines. It was impossible.

"We are anchored," he said, gloomily. "There is one hope for us. We can camp here aboard the air-ship until another spring and then make an effort to travel overland to Reykjavik or some other Greenland settlement."

"That's a long while to wait," declared Obadiah.

"Yes, it is," said Frank, "but it is making a virtue of necessity."

"To be sure!"

"We have plenty of provisions—enough to last a year."

This was the only reassuring thing about the situation. But the idea of remaining buried an entire season there in the ice was unbearable.

A great depression came over all. They sat about listless and dismayed for a number of days.

The weather outside was bitter cold. It could be seen that ice was rapidly forming in the strait.

"Well," said Captain Obadiah bracing up a bit; "we can at least go bear hunting, or perhaps find Esquimaux."

"Esquimaux!" cried Olson, "they are the chaps who can take us in their sledges and carry us to Reykjavik."

"No," said Frank; "I don't believe we'll find an Esquimaux in this part of the country this winter. They locate further south!"

"Why not make an expedition to find them?" asked Olson eagerly.

"It would hardly be safe," said Frank. "We could not travel far afoot and would lose our way and perish!"

"That is right, comrades!" declared Obadiah. "We had better stay here."

But at that moment a strange distant sound came to the ears of all. For a moment they were electrified.

"What is that?" exclaimed Frank.

"On my word!" cried Obadiah, "it sounded like a fog whistle."

"A steamer whistle," decided Olson, "but it can't be."

"Oh, surely not," agreed Frank. "There could be no vessel in the strait this time of year."

Again the distant sound was heard. This was enough.

All donned their furs and rushed out on deck. With leveled glasses they scanned the blue waters of the strait.

Far down on the horizon line there was a black speck and an ascending column. It was smoke.

"Whurroo!" shouted Barney, at the top of his lungs, "it's a steamer, fer shure, and they're whistling for us."

"Then we'll return the signal," cried Frank.

He sprang to the electric gun. He sent a time bomb high in air. It exploded with terrific report.

Again the whistle came. The signal had been heard.

Who can describe the suspense and excitement of the voyagers as the little steamer drew nearer. Up the straits she came and the castaways rushed down to the edge of the ice.

And to the amazement of all on her deck stood a familiar figure. It was Oliver Ham, the owner of the lost Advance.

A boat came out to the ice.

A moment later Ham was embracing Captain Obadiah, who lugubriously told of the fate of the Advance.

"I didn't care for that," cried Ham; "but I knew that it was a terrible undertaking for you two old chaps, and I thought I would go after you and bring you safely home."

"You have saved our lives!" cried Obadiah, wildly. "God bless you, Oliver Ham! I'll never forget this!"

But why make a long story of it?

All were safely transported to the decks of the steamer. Then all the valuable effects of the air ship were removed.

Of course it was useless to attempt to take the Shooting Star home.

"Never mind," said Frank; "I'll build another one to beat her."

Southward the Spray turned her prow.

The details of the voyage home were of small interest. Captain Horn and Olson went back to the Veterans' Club well supplied with fresh and thrilling yarns.

Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp went back to Readestown, and there they are to-day, with which happy announcement we beg leave to end our tale of the trip to LATITUDE 90 DEG.

[THE END.]

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